

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 SS-15 NSC-05

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4961

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SAN SALVADOR 3406

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, ES

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR CATTO'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT ROMERO

THE FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF A MEMORANDUM WHICH FORMER

AMBASSADOR CATTO, J #

MM#WROTE ON HIS MEETING JULY 18 WITH

PRESIDENT ROMERO:

QTE I CALLED ON PRESIDENT ROMERO THIS AFTERNOON
(JULY 18) AND FOR AN HOUR AND A QUARTER WE DISCUSSED THE
SITUATION IN EL SALVADOR AND SALVADORAN RELATIONS WITH THE
UNITED STATES. THE PRESIDENT MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

QTE (1) HE DESCRIBED THE ELCTORIAL CAMPAIGN AND SAID
IT WAS NO WONDER THAT THE UNO LOST BECAUSE THEY HAD AN
INEPT CANDIDATE ("ALTHOUGH I WILL SAY NOTHING AGAINST
A COMPANERO DE ARMAS"). FURTHERMORE, UNO, IN A SELF-
FULFILLING PROPHECY, PREDICTED ITS OWN DEFEAT, SAYING IT
WOULD BE CHEATED.

QTE (2) HE DISCUSSED THE POST ELECTION RIOTS AND
DENIED THAT THERE WERE ANY DEATHS IN PLAZA LIBERTAD (CONTRARY),
I GATHER, TO OPPOSITION REPORTS). THE DEATHS CAME WHEN
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MOBS RIOTED--BURNING, TURNING OVER CARS, ETC. THE POLICE
FIRED UNDER GREAT PROVOCATION AND SOME OFFICERS WERE
THEMSELVES WOUNDED.

QTE (3) HE TAKES THE POSITION THAT EL SALVADOR IS IN
A SINK OR SWIM SITUATION AND HE WANTS ALL SECTORS TO PULL
TOGETHER. WHILE HE WILL NOT, AS REQUESTED GO TO CALL

ON THE ARCHBISHOP, HIS DOOR IS ALWAYS OPEN. HE MET LAST WEEK FOR THREE HOURS WITH SIX PRIESTS TO EXPLAIN TO THEM HIS VIEWS. THEY ASKED HIM TO ALLOW THE EXPELLED PRIESTS TO RETURN. THAT, HE SAID, HE COULD NOT DO. NONETHELESS, HE UNDERSTANDS THE NEED OF THE CHURCH FOR ADDITIONAL PRIESTS AND HE OFFERED TO COOPERATE WITH THE CHURCH IN SELECTING SUITABLE CANDIDATES--"IF THEY WOULD SEND ME A LIST OF SAY TWENTY PRIESTS I WOULD CHECK AND PERHAPS APPROVE SIXTEEN."

QTE (4) HE MET PRIVATELY WITH PDC LEADER FIDEL CHAVEZ AND ON JULY 15 HE AGAIN SAW CHAVEZ AND THREE OTHER PDC PEOPLE FOR TWO AND ONE-HALF HOURS. HE TOLD THEM THAT THERE HAVE "BEEN MISTAKES ON BOTH SIDES." (HE URGED ME TO GO SEE CHAVEZ.) HE LAMENTED THE FACT THAT CLARAMOUNT HAD FLED THE COUNTRY AND REITERATED THAT DUARTE WOULD BE WELCOMED BACK WHENEVER HE WISHES TO COME, A POINT HE RECENTLY MADE TO DUARTE'S BROTHER. FURTHERMORE, HE WOULD BE PLEASED TO MEET WITH DUARTE IF HE SHOULD RETURN.

QTE I GAVE THE PRESIDENT A FRANK APPRAISAL OF THE MOOD OF OUR PRESIDENT, THE CONGRESS AND THE PRESS IN THE UNITED STATES AND OF WHAT I FORESEE AS THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE PRESENT SITUATION. I POINTED OUT THAT THE U.S. HAS NO VITAL INTEREST IN EL SALVADOR AND THAT HERE IT CAN PRACTICE WHAT IT PREACHES WITH VIGOR. WE DISCUSSED THE STATUS OF THE SAN LORENZO DAM LOAN AND THE FUTURE OF THE AID PROGRAM. I URGED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HIM TO MAKE A FIRM STATEMENT OF DEDICATION TO JUSTICE AND PURSUIT OF TERRORISTS OF BOTH THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT. HE DEMURRED, SAYING THAT TO REPEAT WHAT HE HAD JUST SAID IN HIS INAUGURATION SPEECH WOULD ENCOURAGE RADICAL ELEMENTS. HE OUTLINED THE SECURITY MEASURES IN EFFECT TO PROTECT THE JESUITS ALTHOUGH HE IS NOT CONVINCED THAT THE UNION GUERRERA BLANCA (UGB) REALLY EXISTS AND HE CONSIDERS IT POSSIBLE THAT THE WHOLE THING IS THE INVENTION OF RADICAL PRIESTS AND THE LEFTIST ALLIES. ON JULY 19 HE WILL TAKE "MAUWIVE AND VISIBLE MEASURES" TO PROTECT THE JESUITS AS JULY 20 IS THE DEADLINE GIVEN BY THE TERRORISTS.

QTE COMMENT: I CAME AWAY WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT THE PRESIDENT IS GENERALLY COMMITTED TO DIALOGUE AND TO TRYING TO FORGE A NATIONAL CONSENSUS. HE TOLD THE OPPOSITION LEADERS WITH WHOM HE MET THAT THERE WOULD BE "SURPRISES" IN HIS ADMINISTRATION. HE HAD MET WITH THE CHURCH, THE OPPOSITION AND LABOR AND WILL CONTINUE HIS OPEN DOOR POLICY. I DO NOT THINK, HOWEVER, THAT HE UNDERSTANDS THE EXTENT OF THE TROUBLE FOR HIM THAT IS BREWING IN THE UNITED STATES.

UNQTE.

LUBENSKY

NOTE BY OC/T: #AS RECEIVED

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Message Attributes

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Sent Date: 21-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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